

Ambassador Edward W. Stimpson
Civil-Military Air Traffic Management Conference
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Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. Congratulations to the U.S. Department of Defense and the Air Traffic Control Association for arranging the first ever-international civil-military air traffic management conference. This is a historic and important meeting.

The theme of this conference, "Strengthening International Partnerships" is timely. The opportunity to investigate how we can better plan, coordinate and work together on an international basis to share air space resources and improve performance is definitely a "win-win" situation. As Ben Franklin, one of the founders of my country once said "we must indeed all hang together, or most assuredly we will all hang separately".

Airspace is an important international resource and crucial to national defenses and the Global Air Transportation System. Recently, Eurocontrol made an informal presentation at ICAO. The briefing clearly demonstrated the impact that military airspace has on the efficiency of civil aviation operations and the need for flexibility. Similar situations also exist in the U.S. and other parts of the world. Importantly, Civil/Military cooperation and interoperability can enhance civil infrastructure and efficiency without limiting the military mission.

In the United States considerable progress has been made. Better coordination now exists between the FAA and the Department of Defense. Some former military airspace has been turned back for civil use. Restricted areas along the East Coast of the U.S. have been opened up to allow civil aircraft to pass through on a real

time coordinated basis without diverting around them. We must continue to work towards this goal by wisely managing the airspace.

The good news is that the EU, U.S. and other regions of the world are putting effort and considerable resources into airspace design. We all agree on one main goal: improving the efficiency of the airspace.

The Regional Airspace Initiative (RAI) is an innovative and important effort. Since its inception in 1992 much has been accomplished. Bilateral and multilateral studies and cooperative efforts on ATC to facilitate modernization and compatibility within this area have been undertaken. An excellent article “How Poland Achieved the Goals of the Regional Airspace Initiative” in a recent issue of the Journal of Air Traffic Control documents how resource sharing and regional cooperation “minimized the total costs of satisfying the host countries, air traffic control and air sovereignty requirements.”

A number of factors are key to the success of an international program like RAI. The political will of governments to participate and cooperate are essential. Partnerships with industry are important. The involvement of international organizations like the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adds to success. ICAO objectives and programs complement the goals and objectives of this meeting. ICAO is an important partner, and is in fact the only global forum for states to discuss and decide steps to be taken in the future.

Since it was created in 1944, ICAO has had a positive and significant record of fostering international cooperation. With 188 member States, ICAO’s mission continues to be ensuring the highest possible degree of safety, security, regularity and efficiency of international civil aviation.

ICAO is the only internationally recognized body charged with the establishment of global technical standards and recommended practices and the development of guidance material for international civil aviation. Standards and recommended practices are published in 18 annexes. The annexes cover all aspects of aviation including aircraft and aircrews, airports, navigation services, infrastructure, security, and environment.

Once standards are adopted member States are expected to either incorporate those standards into their national legislation or regulatory framework or to notify ICAO where there will be national differences from the internationally agreed standard. If you build, repair, operate or just travel on an aircraft, some aspect of ICAO has touched you.

A recent safety accomplishment of ICAO has been the establishment of an international standard for language proficiency. Safety statistics show that a significant number of serious accidents and incidents have been caused by a lack of language proficiency and misunderstanding between the pilot and the controller. The use of the English language at international facilities where pilots and controllers do not share a common language has been an ICAO recommended practice for many years. However, it has not been a standard.

Last March, the ICAO Council approved a standard for international civil aviation that requires pilots and controllers to demonstrate a defined level of proficiency in the language that they use to communicate. This is an important safety action, which will lead to long-term positive safety results.

Last month ICAO also approved a final position for presentation to the International Telecommunications Union -World Radio Communications Conference to be held in Geneva in June. This meeting will determine the use of spectrum, an extremely important issue for both civil and military aviation. ICAO's main concern is the protection of existing spectrum allocation for current

aviation use and to prevent interference, which could raise serious safety concerns and impact the future growth and operations of both civil and military aviation. Military concerns were taken into consideration in developing the ICAO position. ICAO is also communicating to all member states asking them to proactively support the ICAO position. Your government support for the ICAO position could be most helpful.

This September ICAO will hold its 11th Air Navigation Conference. Important decisions will be made on the global systems of the future. FAA Administrator Blakey has stated that we owe it to the industry to promote harmonization of international standards. She is right! This involves the creation of an environment where new technologies are interoperable among civil and military users and can enter the system more quickly. We urge member states to participate in this significant and important conference.

Through its Technical Cooperation Bureau, ICAO has played an important role in reconstruction programs. In Afghanistan, ICAO worked closely with the Coalition Forces to establish safe air traffic procedures in the area. A comprehensive evaluation of what needed to be done to rehabilitate international civil aviation was also accomplished. Subsequently, ICAO has been asked by the new Afghan government to execute some of these projects.

A major goal of the Regional Airspace Institutes is to combat global terrorism, which is also an important ICAO goal. While ICAO has had a basic set of security standards and an assistance program since the early 1990's, after 9/11 security became one of its highest priorities. Historically, ICAO operates on the basis of consensus, taking years to reach agreement on very technical issues. As a result of 9/11, ICAO changed the way it does business on critical safety and security issues. A "fast track" procedure has been adopted and new amendments to security and safety standards are coming out in record time.

In February 2002, a special Ministerial Meeting attended by over 160 countries was held on aviation security and an enhanced security program was adopted. This included an agreement for an international standard for locking and hardening cockpit doors, new flight crew procedures and an international security audit program to determine compliance with ICAO security standards. Audits including selected airports began late last year. Bulgaria has taken a leadership role and volunteered to be the first state to be audited in this region. ICAO will complete about 20 security audits this year. In addition, the ICAO security program includes a significant training component and a technical assistance element to help states comply with international standards.

The U.S. strongly supports the enhanced ICAO Security Program and is a major financial contributor. The U.S. is represented by the Transportation Security Administration, and with 21 other states, actively participates in ICAO's Aviation Security (AVSEC) Panel to help guide ICAO efforts.

While responding to the security fallout from September 11th, safety remains an overriding consideration in everything that the organization does. Traditionally, ICAO served primarily as a standard setting body, but based on a U.S. initiative, the organization began universal, mandatory safety audits of member states to determine their compliance with ICAO safety standards.

Initially ICAO audits focused on the ability of countries to regulate licensing, air carrier operations, and airworthiness. Safety audits have now been completed on 180 contracting states. Significantly, the results of these safety audits have shown that regions of the world and states with the highest adherence to ICAO standards and recommendations have the best safety records. This is not surprising and demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of international safety standards. Next year ICAO will also add audit elements for air traffic control systems, airports and accident investigation. The addition of these audits will further enhance international civil aviation safety

Just over 99 years ago, the Wright Brothers made the world's first flight in a power driven, heavier-than-air machine near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. With Orville at the controls, the plane flew 120 feet (37 meters) and was in the air 12 seconds. As we celebrate the 100th Anniversary this year, it is time to reflect on the progress that we have all made together in developing the global aviation system.

Aviation has truly transformed the world. Each year over 25 million flights transport about 1.6 billion passengers and 30 million tons of freight and mail worldwide. It is estimated that air carriers transport two per cent of the world's trade by weight but forty per cent of the world's trade by value. Clearly, a nation must have its own air links, if it is to develop trade in high value goods. According to ICAO estimates, more than four and a half per cent of world economic output maybe attributed to the air transport component of civil aviation.

The U.S. has entered into Open Skies agreements with almost 60 countries, 20 in Europe including the Czech Republic, to establish liberal ground rules designed to facilitate the growth of an efficient market-based international aviation system. This provides new opportunities for increasing commerce and business exchanges, investment, exports and tourism.

Efficient air transportation is a prerequisite for developing manufacturing sites, financial centers and tourism. Daily international air service can add hundreds of millions of dollars to local economies. A safe and efficient airspace infrastructure is an essential element for both national and regional economic development for all regions of the world.

The "Strengthening International Partnerships" is helped by this meeting here in Prague. Cooperation and working together remain important keys for the future. And remember, every time you fly, some aspect of ICAO's activities touch you.